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ABSTRACT

There was a need for the teenage parents (in the teen-age parenting support group) to be accepted by their peers and to be able to comfortably communicate and express their feelings and concerns about parenting. There were many programs to help teenage parents before the birth of their child, but none after the birth when the stress of having to cope with parenthood is complicated by being an adolescent student. This program was developed to help support the students through the difficult time of becoming a parent. The group consisted of black female teenage mothers (N=10) who met once a week for 10 weeks. The students compiled a list of concerns that were to be addressed during the meetings. The topics included relationships; feelings; values and goals; expectations versus reality of parenting; discipline; coping skills; time management; child care; and educational and vocational goals. Individuals from the school and community were called upon as guest speakers. The students responded to questionnaires about their values and concerns. The students favorably evaluated the program. A handbook on implementing a teenage parent group was compiled from the activities that transpired during the 10 weeks. The handbook is a model to help other teachers establish a program in their schools. (ABL)

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEEN-AGE PARENTING SUPPORT GROUP IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

By

Elisa Ann Becher

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist.

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July 1984

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of a Teen-Age Parenting Support Group in the School Setting.

Becher, Elisa A., 1983 Practicum Report, Nova University, Center for the Advancement of Education.

Descriptors: Pregnant Students/Board of Education Policy/ Student Rights/Peer Influence/Peer Relationships/Peer Counseling/Peer Acceptance/Child Abuse/Child Welfare/Family Problems/ Parent Child Relationships/Child Rearing/Child Advocacy/Legal Aid/Abortions/Contraception/Family Planning/Medical Services/ Minority Group Children/Black Youth/Ethics/Sexuality/Psychological Needs/Adolescents/Secondary School Students/High School Students.

The author is a Home Economist, who taught the child care class, implemented a teen-age parenting support group in the school setting. There was a need for the teen parents to be accepted by their peers and to be able to comfortably communicate and express their feelings and concerns about parenting. There are many programs to help teen parents before the birth of their child, but none after the birth when the stress of having to cope with parenthood is complicated by being an adolescent student. This program helped to support the students through a very difficult time: Becoming a Parent.

The group consisted of ten black female teen parents, which met once a week for ten weeks. The students compiled a list of concerns that were to be addressed during the meetings. The topics included were; Relationships, Feelings, Values and

Goals, Expectations versus Reality of parenting, Discipline, Coping Skills, Time Management, Child Care and Educational and Vocational Goals. Many support individuals from the school and community were called upon as guest speakers, such as the Cyesis represntative, the school nurse, the Dean of girls, the peer counselor and the guidance counselor. The students were asked to fill in questionaires about their feelings, values and concerns. The students evaluated favorably the effectiveness of the program. Many wished to return to this program the next year. A handbook on how to implement a teen parent group was compiled from the activities that transpired during the ten weeks. The handbook is a model to help other teachers establish a program in their schools.

Appendices Included: Schedule of Discussions, Teen Support Group Contact Sheet, Values, Checklist, Attendance Sheet for Play Group, Teen Parent Evaluation of Program, Handbook on How to Implement a Teen Support Group in the School Setting.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

I. PURPOSE

"Having a baby is not child's play!" This is the message that this researcher had hoped to convey in the child care and human care classes that were taught during the 1982-1983 school year. The classes included the study of child development, child care, parenting, reproduction, pregnancy and contraception. Some students were to be involved with these classes for three, one-hour sessions a day. The setting is a lower to middle socio-economic community in a West Broward high school in Florida. The students range in age from 15 - 18 years. The total female/male enrollment of these classes was 85/4 respectively. The general school population consists of 60% white students and 40% black students. Students are well-mannered and get along peacefully.

There was an excellent rapport between teacher and students in these classes, which was a very significant factor in what was to transpire. The students seemed to enjoy and relate to this researcher's experiences in raising three children. Not once was it suspected that there were other parents seated in the room. Three months into the semester it became evident that one of the girls was pregnant. The students in this class were very protective and involved with the mother-to-be. It was assumed, by this reporter, that everyone accepted her as we did. It would soon come to pass that the situation was not as rare or as novel as was suspected. Our class created a haven, a place where the pregnant student felt comfortable,

protected and accepted. She opened up and shared her experiences with all of us. Soon other girls in the class wanted to discuss their babies. It seemed that our mothers had formed a very special clique. They would sit together and compare experiences about their children. They were sharing a situation, which would have typically isolated them from their peers. These students can receive help and support, if they wish, while they are pregnant. Often they are unaware that help does exist or are reluctant to ask for help or advice. Our school is visited every Monday by Mary Williams who is the Cyesis representative. Cyesis is a special program set up for pregnant teens. They can attend school at a separate facility or they may remain in school and be counseled weekly by Ms. Williams. This position entails finding pregnant students, counseling and advising them during the very traumatic time of pregnancy and birth. Once they have their babies they are left unassisted. There is no provision for counseling, advising and supporting teen parents at a time when they need it the most, after they become parents. It also seems very apparent that just imparting knowledge of parenting is not enough. There is a very real need to become involved in sharing and comparing experiences with one's peers, with the teacher present to act as a facilitator to monitor and counsel the group as needed.

Unknowingly, an informal parenting support group had been established. A teen pregnancy is a very lonely and isolating experience. To be different at a time when you are just finding

your identity and wanting to be accepted by one's peers is extremely stressful. It was clear that there was a strong need for a more structured environment to be established where students, male and female, could come and share their common concerns and problems, which are quite unique to this situation.

The following facts substantiate our teen's dilemma: It is estimated that one million teen-agers will become pregnant each year in the United States. Nine out of ten teen-age mothers who give bith keep their babies.

Pregnancy is the most common reason for teen-age girls dropping out of school.

Although teen-age pregnancy is high-risk by definition, nearly half receive no prenatal care in their first trimester. Death rates for babies born to mothers under 18 are nearly twice that for babies born to mothers aged 20 - 29. Between 1967 and 1977, the rate of out-of-wedlock births to mothers under 18 doubled. Three out of five pregnant teen-age brides separate or divorce within six years after their marriage. The number of teen-age abortions has risen 65% since 1973. One-third of all abortions in this country are for teen-agers. Nearly two-thirds of all teen-age pregnancies are unintentional.[1]

These statistics reconfirm that there is a definite need for teens to acquire parenting skills if this trend continues. Programs are available to teen-age parents before the birth of their child. There are very few or non-existant programs, as far as this researcher can discern, that serve the teen,

when indeed, they have become a parent. It also should be noted that teen-age pregnancies result with more birth abnormalities,[2] and the incidence of child abuse occurs more often when teens are parents. Too much, too soon. They are asked to give more than they are ready to and to deal with complications that most adults would find trying.

Thus, to summarize the problem it can be stated that, students are left to cope with the extremely stressful task of child rearing at a time when they are the least likely to deal with the situation on a physical, mental, emotional, social and economic level. They become isolated from their peers and parents at a time when their support is the most needed by the teen-ager. It was concluded by this researcher that there was a need to form a teen-age parenting support group for male and female high school students, ranging in ages 15 - 18 years. This group would act as a buffer and a support system at a very stressful time: becoming a parent.

Outcome Objectives:

It was the hope of this researcher to accomplish the following objectives after ten weeks of one-hour meetings.

1. 80% of the teen parents attending the support group would score 80% when tested on a questionaire concerning where to go for help and advice when confronted with a parenting problem, to be measuredby a pre and post-test.
2. 80% of the teen parents would have established one close relationship with another parent (preferably experienced) and 50% of the time would seek out the experienced teen

parent by phone or by class conference, to be measured by logged entries, which are to be kept by each student. Appendix B.

3. 80% of the teen parents would verbally or in written form express and communicate feelings and values 60% of the time during group discussion. Checklists and worksheets on coping and communicative skills would be used as measurement. Apendix C.
4. 80% of the teen parents would, in written form, compile a list of specific long-term and short-term goals for themselves and their children, referring to this list 50% of the time when making decisions. Checklists and worksheets would be used as measurement.
5. 50% of the teen parents would establish a play group after school hours, 80% of the time 50% of the group will participate with their child. An elected secretary will coordinate a schedule of dates, locations and activities for the group, to be measured by a record of attendance to be kept by the secretary. Appendix D.

CHAPTER II

Research

II. RESEARCH

It had become apparent to this researcher while collecting data that the number of teen-age pregnancies that are visible or apparent very well may be just the tip of the iceberg. How many are there, who become pregnant, and do not seek help? How many pregnancies terminate in abortion or miscarriage? How many teen-agers drop out of school due to pregnancy? There are more teen parents than we know and perhaps we will ever know. There appears to be many programs during pregnancy but none after the birth to help teens cope with their situation. The research which will be cited below indicated there is a strong need for support after birth and suggests some possible ways programs can be implemented. However, there were none mentioned specifically, which are now in existence, that this researcher could uncover.

One article that re-enforces the need for a support after birth program was Self-Esteem and Social Network of the Young Pregnant Teen-ager - Education Outcomes.[6] The author states, "The pregnant teenager is less apt to finish high school although many programs exist to help her to continue schooling during pregnancy. However, few exist to help after birth when transportation, day care and financial aid call for a coordinated multi-agency effort... Not only is length and continuance of schooling linked with a brighter economic future, but is the best predictor of future contraception use and avoidance of

subsequent pregnancies. Like dominoes, a chain of events, one leads to another causing the teen-age parent one problem after another at a time when they are least capable of handling or coping."[6] It was noted that the perspective grandmother is most disapproving yet the adolescent turns to her for support. A teen support group might offer a more positve and more accepting source of support. The group would provide a place to release tension from the home situation. It also was noted that school satisfaction or lack of it may lead to willingness to risk pregnancy and possible reluctance to surmount the obstacles associated with returning to school after giving birth. A support group might encourage teens to return to school. It was recommended that grandmothers and younger sisters should be involved in any type of counseling the teen receive. Finally, it was noted that the school is a primary public agency that has contact with young females. Its role should be to provide sex education to identify and to counsel women dissatisfied with the educational process and to provide education both during and after pregnancy.

Another study, Helping Adolescents Deal With Pregnancy: A Psychiatric Approach[2], points out the importance of communication skills. "In adequacies in the communication process may be one of many causes for failing to utilize any contraception. It may in part be a consequence of failure to maintain adequate communication with significant others. In order for us to help the adolescent deal with pregnancy as a real issue, we must improve the communication process and the

interpersonal skills that are necessary pre-requisites for governing and regulating intimate relationships."[2] This research indicated that even though teens were taught reproduction and birth control, they still became pregnant. There was a strong need to discuss and to talk about one's own personal situation. It is one thing to have knowledge and another thing to decide when and how to use this information.

Another study, Identify Formation: Pregnant and Non-Pregnant Adolescents[3], helped to stress the importance of teens being accepted within their peer group. Pregnancy would tend to cause them to experience rejection and isolation. "Adolescence is a period in which the individual must positively resolve the task of identity versus identity confusion ... Basically this definition refers to the development of a personality within a social framework . . . a group identity in which the adolescent forms a meaningful realtionship with a peer group and subsequently obtains a sense of belonging." The study further states, "When pregnancy occurs during adolescence the ego identity formation process is complicated. It causes a need to be dependent at a time when one is trying to be independent. It requires the girl to give of herself when she is not ready to give. Pregnancy estranges the girl from her peer group relationships."[3] A teen parent group would provide an accepting peer group that would enable the sharing and solving of many similar problems that only teen parents would have to experience.

Studies that were available to this researcher did not

reveal any specific programs in existence at the present time. Descriptions of different types of possible programs were noted and there was agreement that there was a strong need for one to be implemented. Title IX of 1972 Education Amendment mandates equal educational treatment for pregnant students. There are several different ways in which the school may fulfill this mandate. The Response of the Schools to Teen-age Pregnancy and Parenthood[5] is the only current (1981) major research project that deals with what the schools are doing or not doing about educating pregnant and parenting teens. The article continues to explain that some schools do offer instruction in child development, good nutrition and medical care or referral to special programs, but often with minimal core curriculum and insufficient vocational guidance. More important, many offer little or no countinuing services after the babies are born and the young mothers must restructure their lives to function as parents, students, and adolescents.[5] Although federal and state governments have allocated some funds for support of local programs, the author reports there has not been sufficient leadership or support for innovative program efforts. Listed below are the various types of programs that are possible.

Inclusive Curriculum

Isolated in private schools, general education curriculum with an emphasis on parenting and child development courses. Students are physically isolated and subjected to lower academic standards. It is expensive due to low student/teacher ratio.

Usually serves only a small percentage of eligible students.[5]

Noninclusive

Students remain in regular school during pregnancy and after delivery. The assumption is that the greatest trauma of pregnancy begins, not ends, with delivery. They, thus, focus on helping the teen-ager adjust to the life she must lead after delivery. To integrate the roles of student, teen-ager, and parent.[5]

Subdivision of Noninclusive

Noninclusive Supplimentary Curriculum

This program gives academic credit for course work relevant to pregnancy and parenting.

Noncurricular Program

This gives no credit, though may provide relevant instruction. May attend school or drop out.

All of these noninclusive programs provide continuing service after delivery, such as counseling and child development. They are less expensive and serve more eligible students. Some also incude child care centers. Since these programs keep the pregnant student in a regular school they avoid the need for her to readjust to regular school. According to one of the Cyesis representatives, the sooner students return to school after delivery the less likely they are to drop out of school. According to Zellman, the strength of such a program would include:

1. Commitment to providing services from the onset of pregnancy through graduation.

2. Providing services regardless of how the pregnant teen-ager resolves her pregnancy.

3. Commitment to serve all those, including dropouts.[5]

The main weakness in these programs viewed by Zellman were that few schools had policies to work with parenting students or the means to help them maintain school attendance such as day care centers or evening classes. A final recommendation which this researcher totally agrees with is, "Don't ignore regular school staff. These women and men can reinforce and multiply a program's effectiveness through their action or conversely reduce it through inaction. Time spent in gaining the active cooperation of regular faculty nurses and counselors in carrying out a much needed pregnancy-parenting program can help turn teen-age parents into productive, self-respecting citizens, who can compete with their peers . . .There is a need for leadership. The presence of a highly motivated person seems necessary for establishing a special program to serve this. At the local level, superintendents and principals could emphasize the positive contribution that regular school personnel can make to the creation of pregnancy-parenting program.[5] There is clearly a role for schools in this area.

Carol Payne Smith's research entitled A Needs Based Curriculum for Teen-age Mothers also confirm the special need of teen parents to remain in school and receive special assistance and guidance during their school day.[4] According to Ms. Smith, consistent with the intent of the concept of "least restrictive

environment," the writer advocates the development of resource rooms in secondary schools to serve the health and social service needs of pregnant teen-agers. School programs which segregate (i.e. Cyesis program) the pregnant student and young mother from vocational programs and the enriched curriculum of the comprehensive high school deprive her of the skills necessary for employment which would adequately support her and her child. Segregating the pregnant adolescent and young mother from regular school programs by placing her in separate schools is not only costly for the taxpayer, but also is not adequate for meeting the curriculum needs of the students.

It is this researcher's belief that the solution presented itself even before the problem was realized. Due to the nature of the child care class, pregnant and parenting students gravitated together. When they became acquainted with each other, mutual concerns and problems were discussed and expressed in class. It became evident to this researcher that a basic need was being met for these students and that they were benefiting from each other's company. After researching this particular topic, it was quite clear that other researchers agreed there was a definite need for teen parents to continue their education. There was a need to establish a group where they could feel accepted and to develop positive self-esteem. There was a need to have a place to go where others have experienced the same dilemmas, where problems and feelings could be expressed freely, where information, advice and counseling could be found

and where teachers and peers truly were concerned and truly cared for their welfare. Once one was fortified by this group, the teen could go on to pursue any academic or vocational classes that were available in the school. The teen support group would help students to become aware of their goals, values, alternatives, and options available to them and how to go about achieving them. This support group may help them to prevent future unwanted pregnancies and encourage them to be more aware of their feelings, wants, and needs. The support group would definitely supply a strong feeling of belonging to one's peer group, which normally would not exist. They would belong to a group of teen parents. This would help them to establish their identity in a positive manner. From the administrative point of view, the stage seems to be set for implementation. Legally the pregnant student is covered under PL 94-142, which states that the student be placed in "the least restrictive environment" to receive their education. Financially there are monies available from the federal government allotted for the teen parent's education. The cost of such a program would be nominal to the taxpayer, since all services are readily available in the school environment. It was pointed out before that the school setting has the greatest access for reaching and helping most effectively, the greates number of students, at the least expense. Other advantages would be, educationally students would continue to receive academic or vocational training which would enable them to seek gainful employment. Socially they would have

established a network of peers. Emotionally they would have a special support system. Member of the school staff would be availabe to them such as the nurse, guidance counselor, dean, social worker, psychologist, teachers and home economist. Transportation is available to attend school. Meals are also available. The only potential problem is child care. If none is available in the community or from relatives, the student has the option to attend adult classes in the evening. Students would still be welcome to attend parenting groups during the day. If permission could be granted, the babies would be welcomed guests to the parent group.

CHAPTER III

Method

III. METHOD

The first step that was taken was that permission from the principal of this researcher's high school was given to implement the teen parent support group. The Cyesis representative and the female student's dean were also quite enthusiastic to participate in the group meetings and were both considered by this researcher to be extremely welcome and valuable additions to the group. The committee on teen pregnancies, on the county level, had also expressed an interest in reviewing the results of this group. Perhaps, if this group meets with their approval, they will make a recommendation for its inclusion on the county level.

The first implementation task to be accomplished was, that 80% of the teen parents would score 80% when tested on a questionaire concerning where to go for help and advise when confronted with a parenting problem, to be measured by pre and post-tests. This appeared to be a good goal initially but turned not to be the top priority of the girls that attended the first teen parent meeting. The first meeting was planned as an informal get together, where the students could socially become acquainted. Punch and cookies were served and the teen parents were all seated at a large table facing each other. This researcher and the Cyesis representative asked each student briefly to tell the other members about themselves. We then compiled a list of mutual concerns and topics the students wished to discuss for the next ten weeks.

Some of the students were already enrolled in the child care classes. They did not seem as interested in learning facts as they were in being able to relate to each other by talking freely and sharing experiences. Most seemed embarassed to express themselves in this open manner in the child care class when non-parents were present. Thus, it seemed to this researcher that the students' feelings and concerns should take precedence over the acquisition of parenting facts at this particular time.

The the first implementation task was revised as follows:

1.80% of the teen parents attending the support group would help to compile a list of concerns, in which 50% of the special interest topics expressed would be addressed during the ten week program, to be measured by the schedule of discussions that were held during the meeting. Appendix A.

These students wanted help in being able to internalize their child care knowledge. This group, in this particular situation was an extension of an ongoing child care class, which was already a source of information.

The list of concerns the girls wished to discuss included the following:

1. Discussion of people in general (relationships), especially concerning their mothers and boyfriends, (i.e. how they reacted to the pregnancy).
2. Feelings about being a parent.
3. Their hopes, dreams, values and goals for the present as well as the future for themselves and their children.

4. Expectations versus the reality of parenting.

5. How to react and understand their baby's behavior (especially how to discipline their children).

6. How to cope with negative feelings and frustrations.

7. Managing time (work and leisure).

8. Arrangements for child care and baby sitters.

9. Discussion on educational and vocational goals.

Due to the concensus of the student's primary concern for understanding relations, the second implementation task remained the same which was:

80% of the teen parents would have established one close relationship with another parent (preferably experienced) and 50% of the them would seek out the experienced teen parent by the phone or by class conference to be measured by logged entries which were to be kept by each student. Appendix B.

By the second session the group was comprised of six black girls ranging in age from 15-18 years. The group later expanded to ten black girls. It should be noted that not all members were always present. One student had to drop out for a few weeks due to the birth of her baby, but returned shortly after her recuperation.

This program began in March during the final quarter of the year. This turned out to be a very poor time to introduce a new program. This program had to compete with Easter vacation, senior trips, the child care classes' student teaching, testing, finals and various end of the year activities and events. Thus the lack of consistent attendance and numerous

interruptions did have some affect on the continuity of this program.

There were various stages of parenthood represented by this group. Two girls were pregnant, one girl had just given birth to her second baby and the others had babies ranging in age from newborn to two years old. It is interesting that every girl approached to join this group did so eagerly. Some even enlisted friends or sisters into this group. The only exception was one girl, who had a two year old child. She would always make an excuse for not attending a meeting. This student's apprehension to participate was respected and she was no longer approached. All the students involved were in vocational studies. None were college bound or academically orientated. Their reading levels were low and most had trouble expressing themselves either orally or in writing. As was pointed out by previous research, girls who had trouble communicating were the ones who most often became pregnant. The group seemed to give support to this data. This point also reinforced the researchers belief that the main purpose of the group should be learning how to cope with parenting on a social and emotional level as well as becoming more aware of ones' feelings and learning avenues for expression of these feelings. To only emphasize the academics of parenting, which is typically done, would defeat what these students wanted and needed to know. The third implementation task was retained as a very vital and top priority goal for this group. It stated:

80% of the teen parents would verbally or in written form

express and communicate feelings and values 60% of the time during group discussion by checklists and worksheets on coping and communicative skills (which would be used as measurements. Appendix C.

The students involved, although very enthusiastic, at first found it hard to open up and discuss their feelings. Perhpas some were even unaware of exactly what they were feeling. Through the use of current newspaper articles, films, checklists and worksheets their interest was sparked and the ice was broken. Nine out of the ten girls were able to express themselves in either a verbal or written form. Many girls had to be coaxed to fill out the checklists and worksheets. As was stated before, they were not academically orientated and tended to shy away from reading and writing. Many forms were incomplete because of this reluctance. Most wanted to talk and some just seemed content to just listen to the discussions. Others would not make any comments unless encouraged by the researcher or if they were directly asked a question. It was very difficult to get documentation from these students. Implementation$ tasks #2 and #4 were not documentated as well as this researcher had anticipated. Students did not record their personal contacts with each other. Although, students did discuss these personal encounters. Next time this researcher will devise a questionaire to obtain this information under classroom supervision. An interesting and unexpected side effect was that members started to ask if their friends could attend. One such girl had just found out she was pregnant.

Another girl, who was not pregnant, but who was contemplating pregnancy visited one session. She later confided to this researcher it was one of her girlfriends, who made her realize that she was not ready to become a mother. Contacts and networking were occurring through the group. Members were bringing friends or sisters at earlier stages of pregnancy. The possibility existed that girls and maybe even boys could be receiving counsel and advice from the very beginning. No one would have to deal with this situation alone if they knew about this group and wished assistance.

Implementation Task #4 was: 80% of the teen parents would, in written form, compile a list of specific long term and short term goals for themselves and their children, referring to this list 50% of the time when making decisions. Checklists and worksheets would be used as measurements, was deleted.

Implementation Task #5 which was: 50% of the teen parents would establish a play group after school hours and 80% of the time, 50% of the group would participate with their child, with an elected secretary who would cooridnate a schedule of dates, locations and activities for the group, to be measured by a record of attendnace, to be kept by the secretary. Appendix D

This task was also deleted. All the girls expressed an interest in meeting after school hours with their babies and boyfriends. They wanted to have picnics where the babies could play and they could compare babies and parenting tips and practices with each other. This never materialized due to the conflict in schedules. There were so many holiday

senior activities, and end of the year preparations, the group could never manage to get enough members to attend at the same time.

To substitute for tasks #4 and #5, the last implementation task was designed to be an evaluation of how students reacted to this program. Thus, the last implementation task was: 80% of the teen parents attending the support group would respond favorably toward the program, with 50% of the students wishing to continue in the group next year, to be measured by a questionaire given at the termination of the program. Appendix E.

CHAPTER IV

Results

In general, despite the poor timing of the implementation of this program, this researcher believes that this program was a very positive step in the right direction to help teen parents. It is also believed by this researcher that all who participated benefited from the existence of this program.

IV. RESULTS

Many of the objectives and results that this researcher had anticipated were accomplished. Some minor adaptations were made on the emphasis and order of priorities of some of the objectives. This was necessary in order to reflect the group's true wants and needs. Implementation task #1 was changed to: 80% of the teen parents attending the support group would help to compile a list of concerns, in which 50% of the special interest topics expressed would be addressed during the ten week program, to be measured by the schedule of discussions that were held during the meetings. Appendix A. 100% of the girls made the list of concerns, because each member was asked to contribute at least one of their concerns and they all complied. Six out of the nine concerns were discussed during the group's meeting. (refer to p.18)
The concerns were re-listed in order of importance and interest to the members, so six topics of vital interest to the members were covered. The topics that remained were managing of time, work and leisure, how to find good babysitters and child care and awareness of educational and vocational goals. Implmentation task #1 was achieved because 100% of the members

participated and more than 50% of these special interests were discussed. This result was very positive because each member felt like a part of the group and it insured that all members would be interested in topics discussed, because they chose and agreed on the topics discussed. Topics were not imposed upon them. Thus there was a high level of interest in this group.

Implementation task #2 which was: 80% of the teen parents would have established once close relationship with another parent (preferably experienced) and 50% of the time would seek out the experienced teen parent by phone or by class conference to be measured by logged entries whicy were to be kept by each student. Appendix B. This researcher did not receive the documentation from the parent contact sheet due to the members failure to fill in and return the requested information. This information was later obtained from the evaluation sheet given the last session (Appendix E) from the question, "Did you make any new friends?" Four members were present at the last session and each one responded positively to this question. Each member listed at least one other member as a new friend. Interestingly, even though not all ten were present, the four that did respond mentioned three other members, that were not present, as new friends. Thus, it is assumed by this researcher that the friendship was reciprocated by the non-present members. So it seemed that seven out of the ten members had formed a new friendhsip. Also,

it was interesting to note, that the one member who very rarely spoke during the group listed four other members, whom she considered as friends. This girl was also the member who confided to this researcher that her New Year's resolution was, "Not to become pregnant again!" She was later referred to the nurse for contraception information. This was an unanticipated result of this objective. A very quiet girl, who had much difficulty in expressing herself was able to make friends and to ask and recieve helpful information that she might in all likelihood not seek out on her own initiative. Implementation task #2 was partially achieved, but had a positive result. 70% of the girls established at least one relationship. This researcher was unable to judge whether, 50% of the time, members had contacted each other due to the lack of documentation. But, it is significant to report that indeed some friendships were established irregardless to how often they interacted.

Implementation task #3 which was: 80% of the teen parents would verbally or in written form express and communicate feelings and values 60% of the time during group discussions, measured by checklists and worksheets on coping and communicative skills. Appendix C.

Seven members respolnded to the three worksheets included in Appendix C. On being an informed parent, all responded mostly in a positive manner. The one shy student girl was the only one to give half positive and half negative responses to her feelings about

being a parent. The second part of this sheet was, Traits of Unborn Child. This researcher tallied the responses. The top rated trait that all the girls wanted for their child was health. Six out of the seven girls valued honesty. Five out of the seven girls valued courtesty. Three out of the seven valued cooperativeness. The traits of attractiveness, independence, high self esteem and sense of humor were not highly valued by this group. Not one of the girls checked initiativeness. Results of this section showed that the members shared similar values for their children, causing a good basis for a common rapport to be formed among members. Only two of the seven members filled in the worksheet Finding out about You, "Why I'm unique - Qualities I Admire in Others." Reinforcing once again their reluctance to put their feelings in written form. Seven out of the seven members would respond to checklist forms where a simple check or X was required. But, when the members were confronted with written work, there was a poor response. It should be noted that the teens were told all their response would be anonymous if they so desired. This still had no affect upon their reaction. The last worksheet, Getting Along with Others, on communicative skills brought out mixed responses. It was difficult to draw any one conclusion. Three out of the five girls felt it was difficult to talk to others. The results of implementation task #3 was also partially achieved. 70% of the teen parents were able in written form to express their feelings. Once again the time

element was difficult to establish due to the instability of student attendance to this group. It is this researcher's hope that each individual had become more aware of their own communicative style and areas of strength and weakness. Perhaps, one goal for the future could be to be more honest with others when expressing their feelings. This was the number two trait that they valued for their children.

Implementation task #4 was: 80% of the teen parents attending the support group would respond favorably towards the program, with 50% of the students wishing to continue in the group the next year, to be measured by a questionaire given at the termination of the program. Appendix E. Only four girls attended the last session. All four responded yes to the question, "Did this program help you?" Three of the four girls said that they would like to be a members for the next year. The one girl who did not respond yes or no to this question was a graduating senior. Each member answered the question, "What did you learn?" Their answers were:

"From this group I learned that the girls are very interested in learning."

"How to be a better parent."

"I learned that there are many ways to rear your child."

"I learned to cooperate."

Some questions that were still left unanswered were:

"I would like to know whether or not in this country, that it is mandatory that when young women decide they want to join the family planning group that their parents have to know?"

"I would like to know how you can stop from having babies." Some suggestions to improve or help the group were:

"Have everyone come to all activities and meetings."

"Maybe if we bring our children in this group."

"One main suggestion I would make is that if you are young and have problems they should feel free to talk to anyone of these ladies."

The evaluations given by these four students in general was very positive towards this group. There were four members or 40% of the group saying, "Yes, this group helped me." Implementation task #4 asked that 50% or half of 80% of the teen parents would respond. Due to poor attendnace it was difficult to document that this implementation task had been met. It was quite evident to this researcher by student participation and attitude, when they were present, it had been met.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

This researcher would like to model this program after the peer counseling program. Student attendance in a program or FTE counts affects whether a program will continue to be offered. It is hoped that this group like peer counseling, because of its special circumstances, will not be affected by student attendance in order to exist. Class size would be allowed to fluctuate at any given time according to student need. Students would receive credit for taking this class and it would be a supplement to the child care class. The person to run this program could be a home economics teacher, guidance counselor, dean, nurse, social worker or any knowledgeable and interested individual involved in the public school community. Students must have very good rapport with this person. It is important that everyone knows of this program's existence, its importance and that it be readily accessible to everyone. It should be listed in the student bulletin for the students' consideration so they can incorporate it into their schedule. The program should be on-going and allowance should be made for absences due to child care, pregnancy and jobs. Flexibility is very essential to this groups' success. Teachers should have an in-service on this program covering its definitions, purpose, goals, etc. The classroom teachers can then support and send referrals to this group. The handbook that is included in Appendix F will help interested parties to implement this program. Funds, staff, resource people, books and films are already available to them.

If possible, it may help if students could form a nursery during school hours for their children. If not, perhaps they might be able to form a play group after school hours for parents and babies. This program should also be opened to evening students and even to the ones who have graduated.

It is this researcher's belief that a program such as this should be initiated early in the school year to achieve the optimal results.

Also hampering student participation, was the fact that each member had to be sent for individually by this researcher to attend the meetings. This was very time consuming until all members could be assembled together. This program was conducted during the reasearcher's planning period and it was left to the discretion of the subject teacher if members would be allowed to attend for that day. This also caused a conflict in student participation. Despite these obstacles, the group in general had a very enthusiastic following. Most girls seemed upset if they had to miss the Monday meeting. Many would complain if they had to wait too long for the pass to arrive that would allow them to attend the meeting.

Possible follow-up studies might be to determine the effectiveness of this program. Is it producing the desired affects? Are students coping better? Are students staying in school?, obtaining jobs?, caring better for their children? and avoiding future pregnancies? It should also be noted that non-parents should be educated about this program. Let interested

non-parents hear and see what it is really like to be a teen parent. It just might prevent some teen pregnancies.

This researcher has high hopes for the future of this program. Parenting is a job, when done correctly, the parent works himself/herself out of a job. It is this researcher's hope that if this program is done properly the future need will become minimal. Teen's no longer will become parents in such great numbers. They will have learned the very valuable lesson "That having a baby is not a game for children to play."

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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2. Helping Adolescents Deal With Pregnancy: A Psychiatric Approach, Schneider, Stanley, Adolescence V17, N66, p. 285-92, Summer 1982.

3. Identity Formation: Pregnant and Non-Pregnant Adolescents. Protinsky, Sprakowski and Atkins, Adolescenses, V17, N65, pp. 73-80, Spring 1982.

4. A Needs-Based Curriculum for Teenage Mothers, Smith, Carol Payne, Education, V102, N3, pp. 254-57, Spring 1982

5. School Programs for Pregnant Teenagers, D. Helmrich, American Education 17:26-7, 1981

6. Self-Esteem and Social Network of the Young Pregnant Teenager, L. Held. bibl., Adolescence 16:905-12, Winter 1981.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adolescent Pregnancy, Leaders Alert Bulletin 30, March of Dimes, November 1981.

A Bulletin compiling statistics regarding teenage pregnancy. It substantiated the facts that teen pregnancies are increasing in numbers and that the teens and their babies are considered in a high-risk category.

Helping Adolescents Deal With Pregnancy: A Psychiatric Approach, Schneider, Stanley, Adolescence V17, N66, pp. 285-92, Summer 1982.

A paper dealing with the psychiatric aspect of a teenage girls' pregnancy. The questions addressed were: "Why does the adolescent girl become pregnant? How does pregnancy affect the adolescent's emotional process? Will the child be an emotional/physical "at risk" case? Which factors governing the adolescent's emotional make-up may affect the birth-delivery process? How can sex education help adolescents deal with the issue of pregnancy?"

Identity Formation: Pregnant & Non-Pregnant Adolescents, Protinsky, Sprokaowski and Atkins, Adolescents, V17, N65, pp/ 73-80, Spring 1982.

A study dealing with the identity formation of pregnant and non pregnant adolescents using the theoretical framework of Eric Erikson which states, "In order for an individual to progress to the next developmental stage in his or her life cycle, the task of the current stage must be resolved in a predominately positive manner." The three areas for a teen are, (1) personal identity, (2) social identity and (3) a philosophical identity. Pregnancy does have an adverse affect

on a teen's progress to the next developmental stage.

A Needs-Based Curriculum for Teenage Mothers, Smith, Carol Payne, Education, V102, N3; pp. 254-57, Spring 1982.

The author is an advocate of pregnant teens remaining in the secondary school to be served by a resource room, thus reinforcing the concept of least restrictive environment. The author feels all parties are best served in this environment. All of the adolescent's health, social, emotional, educational and vocational needs would be met while not causing much of a burden to the taxpayer.

School Programs for Pregnant Teenagers, D. Helmrich, American Education, 17:26-71, 1981.

A summary of various types of school programs that are available to teen parents. The National Institute of Education requested that Gail L. Zellman of Rand Corporation survey the schools around the country to determine this information. The results in the form of the paper entitled, The Response of the Schools to Teenage Pregnancy & Parenthood, was a major research project that dealt with this issue. The results were: (1) Many programs offer little or no continuing service after the babies are born. (2) There is a lack of leadership and innovative program efforts, (3) The mothers tend to be poor, suffer reduced educational opportunities, usually reject marriage and often become dependent on public assistance.

Self-Esteen & Social Network of the Young Pregnant Teenager, L. Held, bibl., Adolescence, 16:905-12, Winter 1981.

Research points out the important role school plays as a public agency in contact with young women. It should provide

sex education and counseling before and after the baby's birth.

Self esteen was the same for pregnant and non-pregnant teens, but school dissatisfaction may lead some to risk pregnancy or to drop out if it is too dificult to remain or return due to parenting problems.

This study recommended grandmothers and younger sisters become involved in education and counseling of teen mothers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Schedule of Discussions
Appendix B	Teen Support Group Contact Sheet
Appendix C	Values Checklist
Appendix D	Attendance Sheet for Play Group
Appendix E	Teen Parent Evaluation of Program
Appendix F	Handbook on How to Implement a Teen Support Group in the School Setting

APPENDIX A

The schedule of discussions that were held during the meetings were as follows:

	Date	Activity	Observation Instrument
1.	3-21	Getting acquainted and compilation of list of concerns and interest of members.	List of concerns compiled p. 18
2.	3-28	Continuation of 1st meeting. Discussion of each member's particular situation. Cyesis' representative discussed the Cyesis program.	Vote on lists of concerns. p. 18
3.	4-11	Viewed video "They Were Too Young." Discussion on reaction to film.	Checklist of values and feelings Appendix C
4.	4-18	Guest Speaker: The Peer Group Coordinator. Discussion on coping skills. Newspaper clipping on teen parents included in discussion.	Checklist of values and feelings Appendix C. Appendix F.
5.	4-25	Planning of play group for mothers and babies. Election of secretary to coordinate activities and keep attendance. Each girl given a list of phone numbers of other members. They were to record contacts with other mothers inside and outside of school	Appendix D. Phone contact Sheet Appendix B.
6.	5-2	Viewed video on "Bonding." Discussion on relating and reacting to babies, how to discipline and what to expect at each stage of development of child.	Checklist of values and feelings. Appendix C.
7.	5-9	Open discussion for common problems. Used readings about or by teen parents to introduce possible common problems ex mothers, boyfriends, jobs, sitters and school work.	Members participation.

APPENDIX A
(continued)

	Date	Activity	Observation Instrument
8.	5-16	Guest Speaker: Public Health Nurse. Film, posters and pamphlets concerning information on good health care for babies.	Members participated.
9.	5-23	Solving of individual problems and referrals were made ex - One member referred to nurse for contraception information, another member wished information on how to obtain swimming lessons for her baby.	Evaluation sheet. Appendix E
10.	5-31	Final Meeting Evaluation sheets filled out by members.	Evaluation Sheet Appendix E.

APPENDIX B

TEEN SUPPORT GROUP CONTACT SHEET

NAME_____

DATE	PERSON CONTACTED	CALLER'S PROBLEM	ADVICE GIVEN	AGREE? YES OR NO

APPENDIX C

Checklists included are:

Becoming An Adult: A Disney Family Studies Series, Walt Disney Educational Media Company, 1979.

I. Nuturing and Responsibilities:

Being an Informed Parent.

II. Self Awareness:

Finding Out Who You Are.

III. Interpersonal Relationships:

Getting Along With Others

BECOMING AN ADULT: A Disney Family Studies Series

Name _____ Date _____

Answering and discussing the following questions will help you explore your willingness and ability to be a nurturing, responsible parent. Indicate your answer by putting an X in the appropriate column.

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Would you be able to . . .	yes	no	?
. . . be responsible for a child for at least 18 years?			
. . . afford to support a child?			
. . . cope with energy demands of work, marriage and a child?			
. . . care for a child's health and safety?			
. . . limit your privacy, freedom, or social life for a child?			
. . . give the love a child needs?			
. . . share your partner's love with a child?			
. . . raise a child alone if your partner should die, or if you should become separated from your partner?			
. . . keep from taking things out on a child when you're angry or upset?			
. . . consistently discipline and set limits for a child without being too strict or too lenient?			
. . . cope with the stress of caring for a child on a 24 hour basis?			
. . . give up or postpone your career or education for a child?			

Parents often have unrealistic expectations concerning how their children will look or act. If the child doesn't meet these expectations, parents may be disappointed and unconsciously transmit this feeling to the child. The next exercise asks you to engage in some futuristic fantasizing so that you might explore your expectations for your child.

Just imagine that you could choose 5 traits for an unborn child. The choice would be permanent; no changes could be made. As a parent of an unborn child, what traits would you choose?

____ Creative	____ Curious	____ Healthy	____ Obedient
____ Attractive	____ Popular	____ Dependable	____ Independent
____ Cooperative	____ High Intelligence	____ Initiative	____ Sense of Humor
____ Courteous	____ Honest	____ High Self-Esteem	____ Talented

Consider why these traits are important to you. Are they realistic?

Name _____ Date _____

Almost every day of your life, you will be asked to make a choice or a decision. The more you know about your feelings, attitudes, beliefs and values, the better your choices are likely to be. The exercise below is designed to help you know yourself better and to help you examine qualities that you value in others.

In the **left** hand column, list, in order from **one** (most important) to **ten** (least important), facts about you that result in your uniqueness as an individual. Write in pencil so that you can change the order if you wish. In the **right** hand column, list the qualities that you admire in others. List them in order — **one** (most important) to **ten** (least important).

Why I'm Unique	Qualities I Admire in Others
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____

The things I'd most like to change about myself are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Name _____ Date _____

Communication is one of the most important factors affecting interpersonal relationships. This questionnaire is designed to help you examine communication patterns in your relationships with your friends and peers.

To get an honest picture, you should answer as quickly and truthfully as possible. Put a check in the appropriate column.

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	Frequently	Rarely	Sometimes
Sending Skills			
1. Do you find it difficult to talk with others?			
2. Do you know what is right but wrong?			
3. Do you expect others to know what it is you are trying to say?			
4. When you pass along information, do you keep it accurate?			
5. Do you speak in a clear and concise manner?			
6. Are you accused of talking too much?			
Listening Skills (empathy)			
1. Do you talk about things interesting to others?			
2. Do you pretend to listen when you aren't?			
3. Do others listen when you talk?			
4. Can you tell when someone is not interested in what you are saying?			
5. Are you aware of how the tone of your voice affects others?			
6. Do you [illegible] others?			
7. Can you tell the difference between what a person is saying and what he/she is feeling?			
8. Do you try to understand another's point of view?			

	Frequently	Rarely	Sometimes
Acceptance Skills			
1. Can you talk without labeling?			
2. Are you pleasant when disagreeing?			
3. Do you use descriptive rather than judgmental words when you talk?			
4. Must you always be right?			
5. Can you express appreciation to others?			
6. Can you apologize when you are wrong?			
7. Do you accept criticism without feeling hurt?			
8. Do you feel embarrassed or uneasy when you receive a compliment?			
Congruence (Genuineness)			
1. Are you open and honest when talking — do the words you say match what you feel?			
2. Do you pretend to agree with others even though you really don't?			
3. Do you try to hide your faults from others?			
4. Do you try to hide your true feelings?			
5. Do you avoid eye contact when talking to others?			
6. Do you act silly or change the subject when feelings are discussed?			

APPENDIX D

TEEN SUPPORT GROUP ATTENDANCE SHEET FOR PLAY GROUP MEETINGS

DATE	WHO ATTENDED	LOCATION	ACTIVITY

APPENDIX E

TEEN PARENT EVALUATION OF PROGRAM

1. What did you learn from our group?
2. What would you still like to know?
3. Would you like to be a member again next year?
4. What suggestions could you make to improve this group?
5. Did you make any new friends? Who?
6. Did this group help you to be a better parent?

APPENDIX F

HOW TO IMPLEMENT TEEN PARENT SUPPORT GROUP IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

APPENDIX F

HANDBOOK

Enclosed in this handbook are sample activities and worksheets that will promote and encourage teenage parents to open up, discuss and become more aware of their new role as parents. Listed are books, filmstrips, films, magazines, pamphlets, journals, associations and companies that will aid in supplying current parenting information which is aimed at this group's particular interests and needs.

Please do not forget the many resource people that are available in the school community that can offer their expertise in this area. They are, Board of Health Nurse, School Nurse, Guidance Counselor, Dean, Peer Counselor, Social Worker, Cyesis Representative and, of course, The Home Economist.

Baby Bill of Rights

TALK TO ME,
Sing, hum, babble, or even read the funnies to me! I don't know exactly what you're saying, but I need to hear you. And I do know what you mean, even if I may not know words. Like your voice tones mean, "I love you." Or when you yell, I hear, "You're a pest!" Unless you communicate with me, how can I learn? I learn from you.

HOLD ME.
Everything is so big and new to me. I don't understand where I am. Or who I am. And I get scared. But when you hold me, I feel better. Your warmth warms me. Your breath and heartbeat make me feel I belong. Belong here. Belong to you.

ANSWER MY CRY.
I don't cry to get you upset. Or to get you mad. I cry because I can't tell you how I feel any other way. Maybe I'm cold...or wet...or hungry...or scared and lonely. Answer my cries. You'll soon know what each one means. You won't spoil me. You'll help me to be a better baby—and to make you happier, too.

LOVE ME.
Like me. Love me just as I am. Don't expect me to do what I can't do. Like being toilet-trained. My muscles aren't ready yet. I know I'm messy. But I'm growing. Overlook my baby weaknesses. You're the most important person in my world. I can't make it without you. So get to know me. Have fun with me. And love me—just as I am.

PARENTING SEARCH

A	L	D	C	O	M	M	U	N	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	L	O	U	E	T
T	E	I	J	T	A	I	M	E	B	U	R	N	T	O	N	B	G	R	A	T
H	A	S	Y	C	N	A	N	G	E	R	P	E	D	L	L	O	I	W	N	E
E	G	C	N	I	W	H	E	N	W	H	E	R	E	W	H	L	Y	R	A	F
E	N	I	G	N	I	D	E	E	F	T	S	A	E	R	B	O	I	L	T	D
S	I	P	Y	L	I	M	A	F	T	P	E	P	I	N	N	V	K	S	U	H
O	N	L	N	K	E	N	A	N	O	I	T	P	O	D	A	E	T	I	R	U
C	N	I	B	I	R	T	H	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	S	T	K	N	A	Y
X	A	N	M	A	H	R	K	S	T	H	E	S	R	U	P	O	A	G	L	T
P	L	E	I	E	R	U	T	R	U	N	L	Y	B	G	R	I	M	L	S	P
R	P	A	R	E	N	T	I	N	G	E	R	A	C	Y	A	D	O	E	G	R
E	S	A	N	T	I	D	I	S	E	S	T	A	B	L	I	S	H	M	E	N
T	I	N	T	E	R	I	A	N	I	S	M	J	A	B	D	A	U	G	H	T

Puzzle answers on page 43

1. A man and a woman must be prepared to face the responsibilities of _____ before they decide to have a baby. (9)
2. The first step toward effective parenting is _____ when you would like to have your children. (8)
3. Planning a _____ is one of the most important decisions a couple will make. (6)
4. If a couple is not financially or emotionally prepared to begin parenting, they might use a reliable method of _____ _____. (5, 7)
5. A well-balanced diet is essential during _____ to fulfill the nutritional needs of the mother and child. (9)
6. Special breathing exercises have been devised for women interested in _____ childbirth. (7)
7. During the _____ stages of child-bearing, regular visits to an obstetrician are essential to check the physical development of the fetus. (8)
8. The _____ process will not be as strenuous if a woman follows a healthful diet and exercises regularly during her pregnancy. (5)
9. In contemporary society, the role of the _____ is not limited to the breadwinner. (6)
10. Couples who are unable to bear children often consider _____. (8)
11. As a universally known authority on child care, _____ _____ has guided millions of parents. (2, 5)
12. _____ parenting has increased in recent years as a result of increases in the divorce rate and teenage pregnancy. (6)
13. _____-_____ centers are facilities which provide professional supervision for the children of working parents. (3, 4)
14. The emotional development of a child may be stunted if he/she receives little _____ or attention. (4)
15. Studies have shown that parents who severely mistreat their children were often the victims of child _____ themselves. (5)
16. Working mothers must often decide against _____ because the milk supply cannot be left with a babysitter. (13)
17. For a family to work together successfully, open lines of _____ should be encouraged. (13)
18. Although competition is natural between brothers and sisters, parents can reduce sibling _____ by providing each child with equal attention and approval. (7)
19. Punishment is not always an effective form of _____ since it may result in resentment toward the parents rather than the development of self-control within the child. (10)
20. Patience, dedication, and commitment are three of the many qualities needed in order to become an effective and loving _____. (6)
21. Parents have the responsibility of providing an environment that will _____ a child from birth to adulthood. (7)

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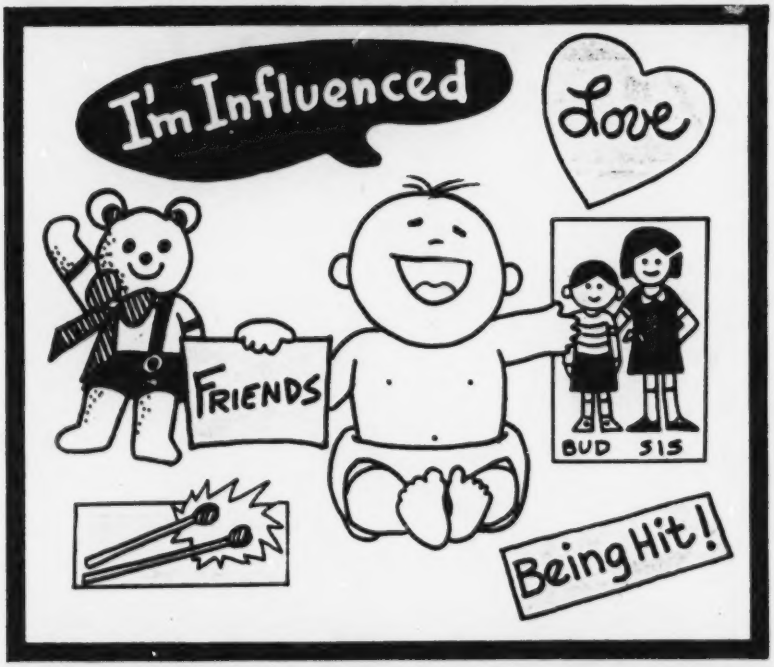
BULLETIN BOARD EXCHANGE



Need an interesting learning activity for your child development classes? Try using your bulletin board. To start out, draw, or cut from a magazine, a picture of a baby. Add a cartoon bubble with the words "I'm Influenced." Students are then asked to pin up on the bulletin board, words, pictures, drawings, or anything that represents influence—good or bad—on a baby's development. Then discuss the items on the board and how each item can influence a child's development.

—Glenda Townsend,
LaMoure Public School,
La Moure, North Dakota

I use a slogan from the March of Dimes, "Be Good to Your Baby Before It Is Born," as a theme for a bulletin board in my parenting classes. To make, on light-colored construction paper, draw an embryo. Around it place circles, cut from construction paper, representing balloons. Attach them to the embryo's arm with yarn. On each of the balloons, write a guideline that a mother should follow during pregnancy in order to have a healthy baby.

—Karen Bramlette, Scottsburg
Senior High School,
Scottsburg, Indiana

MOTIVATION AND VALUES

There are seven steps that students work through as the valuing process. Unless something satisfies all seven of the criteria, it cannot be called a value. Repetition of the process is a major step toward total value development. Values with students change as they learn to look at consequences and as they experience new ideas and attitudes.

1. Choosing Freely. Values, if they are to be prized by the student must be the result of free choice. Values must be freely selected if they are to be really valued by the individual.
2. Choosing From Among Alternatives. A value can only result from situations in which more than one alternative is possible. If there are no alternatives, then there are no choices.
3. Choosing After Thoughtful Consideration Of The Consequences Of Alternatives. Only after consequences have been carefully examined can a value be held intelligently. This criteria helps prevent impulsive or thoughtless choices. Only when the consequences of alternatives are clearly understood can one make intelligent choices.
4. Prizing And Cherishing. Values are those choices that we are proud to hold; those that have a positive influence in our philosophy of life.
5. Affirming. Values that have been chosen thoughtfully and freely are ones that the individual will admit publicly.
6. Acting Upon Choices. For a value to be present it must affect one's life--the books he reads, the friends he makes, the organizations he joines, how he spends his time. Affirming, then, is only part of the process. Talking about something and not doing anything about it reveals a lack of value.
7. Repeating. A value is likely to reappear in different situations, at different times. Something that appears only once in a student's behavior is not a value. Values have persistency.

What does one do if he wants to put the valuing process to work in the classroom to motivate students, if he wants to take on the task of helping students develop and clarify their values? Going back to the seven criteria for a value, the teacher would be encouraged to:

A. Encourage students to make choices and to make them freely.
B. Help them discover and examine available alternatives when faced with choices.
C. Help students weigh alternatives thoughtfully, reflecting on the consequences of each.
D. Encourage them to act, behave, live in accordance with their choices.
E. Give them opportunities to make public affirmations of their choices.
F. Help them to examine repeated behaviors or patterns in their life.

Reference: Louis E. Raths, Harmin Merrill, and Sidney B. Simon. VALUES AND TEACHING. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1971.

IDENTIFYING VALUES FOR MOTIVATION

Strategy #1 - Things I Love To Do

Ask the students to number from 1-20 on a sheet of paper and to list as rapidly as they can the 20 things in life which they really, really love to do. Stress that the papers will not be "corrected" and that there is no right answer about what people should like. When everyone has listed 20 items, the process of coding responses can be started (do not be concerned if some students have less than 20).

1. Place a $ sign by any items which cost more than $3.00 each time you do the activity.
2. Use the code letters F and M. Record which of the items on your list you think your father or mother might have had on their list if they had been asked to make the list at your age.
3. Use the code letters P and A. Put "P" before the items which you prefer doing with PEOPLE and "A" before the items which you prefer doing ALONE.
4. Place a number 5 in front of any items which you think would not be on your list 5 years from now.
5. Go down the list and try to remember the date when you did it last.

---The value identification is to be followed by a sharing.

Strategy #2 - I Learned That I...

This strategy fits in with the one above. The teacher says, "Look at your list as something which tells a lot about you at this time in your life. What did you learn about yourself as you were going through the strategy? Will you please complete one or more of these sentences and share with us some of the learning you did?"

I learned that I . . . .
I noticed that I . . . .
I was surprised to see that I . . .
I was disappointed that I . . .
I was pleased that I . . .
I realized that I . . .

The teacher must be willing to make some "I learned that I . . ." statements, too. Every effort is made for the value-identification for the teacher to be as honest as possible. The students will respond in kind. It is a way of getting the student to own the process of identifying values.

Strategy #3 - Baker's Dozen

This strategy tells about personal priorities. The teacher asks each student to list 13, a baker's dozen, of his favorite items around his house or the school which uses PLUGS, that is, which require electricity. When the students finish, the teacher says, "Now, please draw a line through the three which you really could do without if there were a very serious power shortage. Now, circle the three which really mean the most to you and which you would hold onto until the very end." The main thing is to know what the student wants and to see it in perspective of what he likes less.

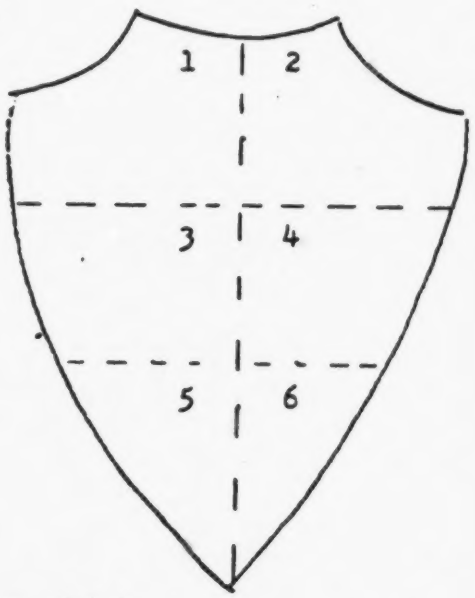
Strategy #4 - "I Urge" Telegrams

The students head a piece of paper with the word "Telegram". The teacher says, "Each of you should think of someone in your real life to whom you would send a telegram which begins with these words: I URGE YOU TO . . . . Then finish the telegram and we'll hear some of them."

Consider the following--(examples)
To My Sister: I urge you to quit taking my bike without asking.
To My Teacher: I urge you to quit thinking that all lessons have to be finished within the time you set. Your student, James.

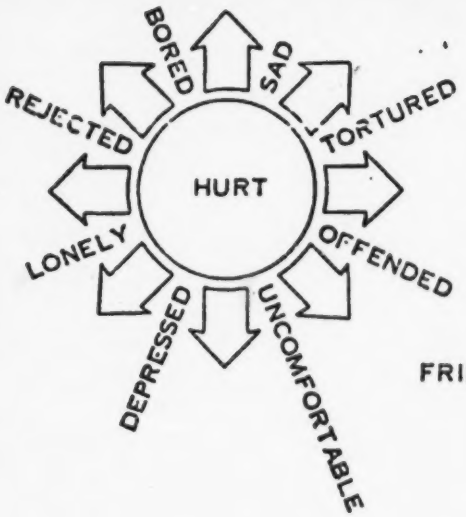
Strategy #5 - Personal Coat of Arms

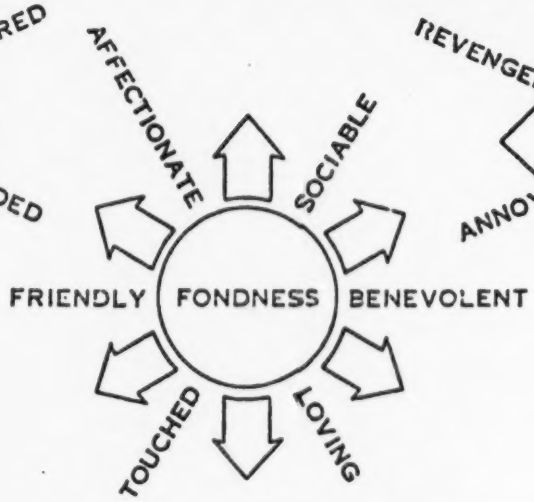
Each student is asked to draw a shield shape in preparation for making a personal coat of arms. The exercise is designed to help us learn more about some of our most strongly held values and to learn the importance of identifying what we believe, that is, literally wearing our values out front on our shields. The coat of arms shield is divided into six sections. The teacher makes it clear that words are to be used only in the sixth block. All the others are to contain pictures. The teacher stresses that it is not an art lesson and even stick figures may be used. Then the teacher tells what is to go in each of the six sections.



1. Draw two pictures. One is to picture something you are very good at and one is to show something you want to become good at; they are both to fit in section one.
2. Make a picture to show one of your values from which you would never budge. This is one about which you feel extremely strong and which you might never give up.
3. Draw a picture to show a value by which your family lives. Make it one that everyone in your family would probably agree is one of their most important.
4. In this block, imagine that you could achieve anything you wanted, and that whatever you tried to do would be a success. What would you strive to do.
5. Use this block to show one of the values you wished all men would believe, and certainly one in which you believe very deeply.
6. In the last block, you can use words. Use four words which you would like other adults and students to say about you behind your back.

The teacher can do several different things at this point. The teacher can have the students share among themselves or hang the pictures on the walls of those who would like to have them up. A game can be played to make a coat of arms to represent living together in that classroom. The Coat of Arms can be done several times during the school year and various shields can be compared and seen as measures of a student's search for values and change of ideas and attitudes.





I FEEL	MY PHYSICAL REACTION IS
NERVOUS when _____	_____
DEPRESSED when _____	_____
JOYOUS when _____	_____
SAD when _____	_____
BORED when _____	_____
UNCOMFORTABLE when _____	_____
REJECTED when _____	_____
AWKWARD when _____	_____
AFFECTIONATE when _____	_____
WITHDRAWN when _____	_____
REPULSED when _____	_____
SCARED when _____	_____
SATISFIED when _____	_____
LONELY when _____	_____
TOUCHED when _____	_____
UNEASY when _____	_____
EXCITED when _____	_____

WHOM DO I TRUST?

Imagine that you need help in each of the situations below. Indicate whether you know someone you would trust to help you by checking PROBABLY or PROBABLY NOT after the description of each situation. In the last column list the qualities that a person you could trust would possess. For example, you

Situations	I know someone I would trust in this situation.	
I Trust Someone	Probably	Probably Not
1. To help me pick out new clothes.		
2. To help me with my most difficult subject.		
3. To help me choose courses to take.		
4. To talk with me if I'm feeling upset.		
5. To talk with me if I'm feeling uncomfortable about a sexual experience.		
6. To talk with me if I've been caught breaking a law.		
7. To help me if I want to find a part-time job.		
8. To talk with me about my religious beliefs.		
9. To help me with my feelings about the death of a friend or relative.		
10. To talk with me about problems I am having with a friend.		
11. To help me decide what to do after I graduate from high school.		

IDENTIFYING FEELINGS IN OTHERS

Understanding your own feelings is an important first step toward accurately identifying feelings in others. Often you can tell how others feel without their saying anything. In the exercise below describe some of the ways people communicate their feelings without speaking.

Feeling/Sensation	Non-Verbal Clues to Feelings
AFFECTION	Embracing
LOVE	
EXCITEMENT	
DEPRESSION	
SHYNESS	
FRUSTRATION	
UNCERTAINTY	
FEAR	
NERVOUSNESS	
REPULSION	
JEALOUSY	
FURY	
ELATION	
WARMTH	
REJECTION	
FRIENDLINESS	
BOREDOM	
FULFILLMENT	

MY PERSONAL GOALS

Short Term

1. What do I want to accomplish?

   Please fill in:

   A. Today

   B. This Week

   C. This Month

2. How will I make each happen?

3. What do I want for my child?

   A. Today

   B. This Week

   C. This Month

4. How can I make this happen for my child?

Long Term

5. What do I want to accomplish?

   A. This Year

   B. In Five Years

6. How can I make this happen?

7. What do I want for my child?

   A. In 1 Year

   B. In 5 Years

8. How can I make this happen?

Unhappy ending

At 14, she couldn't cope with pregnancy

By Scott Kraft
The Associated Press

EDGEWOOD, Md. — Melissa Putney, 14 years old and nine months pregnant, her room tidied and her locker emptied, opened her spiral notebook. "To my dear Mom..." she began, and then filled three pages.

Sitting on a bed of oak leaves in the woods behind school, Melissa and her 12-year-old cousin then finished their picnic lunch and swallowed the last of their wine.

Twelve minutes before noon, a tiny white fleck of light appeared far down the railroad tracks. Then, seconds later, the crescendo of engines going 100 mph.

Amtrak 141 — The Bankers — was right on time.

Melissa ran to the tracks, knelt between the rails and clasped her hands in prayer. Her cousin, Pearl, tried to stop her, but Melissa had always been bigger and stronger.

Melissa Celeste Putney made the sign of the cross.

On that warm Tuesday last week in rural Maryland, a troubled eighth grader and her unborn baby boy died.

"You always ask me if there's anything wrong," she wrote to her mother. "I said, 'No, I'm OK.'

"Mom, I wasn't telling the truth. I was never OK. I was very depressed."

Melissa dealt with her pregnancy by denying it. "I am not pregnant," she wrote in the notebook, two weeks before she was due to give birth.

But the condition was apparent, even on her stocky 5-foot-6 frame.

"I ran away from all of my problems," she wrote. "I am taking the easy way out.

"I am admitting to myself that I am a weak person, not able to handle the weight of life."

Born in Baltimore, Melissa moved to this rural community four years ago. Her mother, Patricia, worked as night custodian at the Middle School. Mrs. Putney, along with four daughters, two sons and some of her grandchildren, lived in a three-bedroom apartment in Beacon Terrace, a housing development.

Middle School Principal Joseph J. Brown described Melissa as an average student who "got along well with her peers."

"It's been a shock to this community, I'll tell you that," Brown said. "And it's going to be quite some time before we're over it."

A framed school portrait on Melissa's casket showed her in a frilly white dress, her short hair parted on the side and a happy grin on her smooth black face.

"She was kinda pretty, and she had lots of friends," said a cousin, Dana Brown, 12, a seventh grader. "She was nice, easy going, could get along with anybody."

Many of the kids at school knew she was pregnant. "In gym class," said 11-year-old Tina Bailey, "you could tell."

Melissa was big for her age, often playing quarterback when the neighborhood kids gathered to play football in a field across the two-lane blacktop.

"She was the best girl out there," said Glenn Sargable, a 14-year-old neighbor. "When she ran, I'll tell you, I looked out."

Last Tuesday, March 15, Melissa walked the two miles to school. She and her cousin, Samaria "Pearl" Ridgley, slipped out a back door before 11 a.m., walked a half mile across the playing fields to the railroad tracks.

The train engineer, with a young daughter of his own, saw Melissa cross herself as he applied the brakes. He cannot bring himself to discuss it.

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. . . the problems of teenage parenthood

PUT MY FUTURE ON HOLD

By Margaret Beyer, Ph.D.

Illustration: Angelina Cuttogarns

The names used in this article are fictitious in order to protect the privacy of the teenage mothers described.

About half the people your age who will ever have children will have their first child by age 19 or 20.

Imagine yourself with a baby at age 19.

How would your plans for the future be different? How—if at all—would they be the same?

A major problem for the teenage mothers I counsel is dealing with the enormous changes in their daily lives and future plans. True, being a parent can be rewarding. But babies are unpredictable and demanding. That makes it hard for parents to have lives of their own.

This is true for older parents, too. But teenage mothers—*two-thirds of whom get pregnant accidentally*—find this situation particularly distressing.

Take Jennifer Edwards*—a good student, popular and active in school, and now a mother. She came to me because she needed to talk to someone about her confused, up-and-down feelings.

"I threw a backyard barbecue to celebrate my sixteenth birthday," Jennifer told me. "But the afternoon didn't turn out the way I planned it. Halfway through the party Dawn started crying and I had to bring her outside.

"My friends really enjoyed playing with her—for a little while. Then they started leaving.

"I guess they just can't relate to me and my life anymore."

Jennifer misses the freedom of her old life, and she feels cut off from her friends.

She also feels disappointed in Paul, Dawn's father.

"He's so awkward with Dawn. He acts like some kind of outsider when he visits us. Dawn is his, too, yet his life hasn't changed at all."

Like many teenage mothers, Jennifer feels a sadness she's never experienced before. *In fact, nine percent of teenage mothers attempt suicide—a figure that is seven times the national average for teens.* But teenage fathers are also prone to depression. Like Paul, their concerns and self-doubts are often overlooked because friends and family tend to focus their attention on the needs of teenage mothers and their children.

Jennifer is also worried about her future. Before she got pregnant, she was looking forward to college. But now. . . .

"Let's face it," she admitted. "There's no way I can finish school without my mom taking care of Dawn—and that's becoming a *big* problem.

"Don't get me wrong. I really appreciate all mom's done for me and Dawn. But I wish she'd just show me what I need to do with Dawn instead of taking over.

"Sometimes I wonder if Dawn even knows I'm her mother."

Jennifer's misgivings about school and parenting are pretty typical among teenage mothers. For financial reasons, most *must* live with their families. *(Ninety percent of the mothers who are Jennifer's age are unemployed; 72 percent collect welfare.)* And, if they continue going to school, they generally must depend on their own mothers, or even grandmothers, to care for their children.

Experienced grandparents can be a big help. But sometimes, as in Jennifer's case, they take over because they think their own children still need to do a lot of growing themselves.

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While it's hard for Jennifer to admit she still needs her parents, that's the least of her *future* problems. *Eight out of ten young women who give birth between ages 15–17 never finish high school, let alone college.* Without an education, most continue throughout adult life in low-paying, dead-end jobs—or living on welfare.

Although it's exhausting for Jennifer to go to school, do her homework and care for Dawn, she's working hard toward her goal of college. But at 17, Thomasine Simms*—another teenage parent I counsel—feels her life has come to a complete stop.

"I should be happy," Thomasine told me with tears in her eyes. "This is my dream come true.

"Joe and I are married. We have our own apartment. And we have a beautiful baby boy."

Thomasine and Joe got married when they found out she was pregnant.

"It's what we wanted to do anyway. Getting pregnant with Jason just moved up our plans.

"Besides, I was excited about being pregnant. At the time I thought, 'Now I'll have someone of my very own to care for—someone who will love me completely.'"

Like a lot of teens who have been unhappy at home, Thomasine thought having a baby would fill a big gap in her life. Unfortunately, babies *need* far more than they can give for a very long time.

In Jason's case, Thomasine has had even more giving to do. He was born early *(premature)* and weighed under five pounds. Since birth, he's had a number of medical problems.

One out of 10 teenage mothers has a baby suffering from low birth weight. These premature babies are more likely to be mentally and/or physically handicapped. And, as Thomasine knows, chronically sick babies are a big drain on parents.

"Jason is so small and fragile—and he cries a lot," she told me. "I try not to carry him around or play with him too much because he's quieter when I just leave him in his crib."

Thomasine didn't expect to feel so unsure of herself as a mother. She's scared and irritable—and sometimes she screams at Jason.

"Is there something wrong with me?" she asked. "I don't hurt Jason, but I don't feel like I give him enough love either. He just isn't what I thought a baby would be."

Most teenage mothers discover that babies can't make up for the love that is missing in their lives. Many, not knowing how to handle their frustration and disappointment, lash out at their children verbally or physically. *In fact, incidence of child abuse and neglect among teenage parents is much higher than in the rest of the population. (Read "It's the Law," pp.16-19, for more information on child abuse.)* Fortunately, Thomasine sought counseling before she struck out at Jason.

Thomasine's problems aren't behind her, though. Her marriage to Joe isn't what she dreamed it would be either.

"We don't have much money. Diapers and formula and baby clothes cost a lot more than Joe and I expected.

"At night we just sit around and watch TV. We can't afford a sitter *and* a night out together!

"Joe gets out with his friends occasionally, but then I'm stuck home alone. That's when I start feeling really trapped."

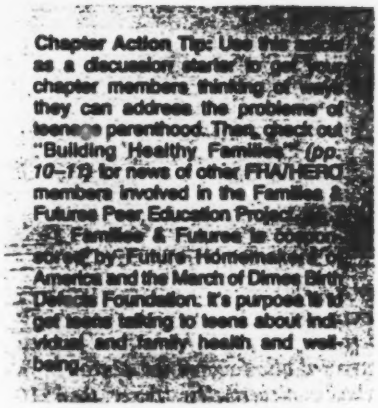
Thomasine admits that Joe feels trapped, too—that they sometimes fight about his nights out.

"I want to be fair with Joe. I know he works hard during the day, but so do I," Thomasine told me.

Like many teenage fathers, Joe quit school and took a job he doesn't really like in order to support Thomasine and the baby. He's trying hard to be a good provider but, so far, hasn't been too successful. Unfortunately, without further schooling, neither he nor Thomasine can expect their financial picture to get much brighter.

That's one of the reasons *most* teenage marriages fail. *In fact, while nearly half of all teenage parents do initially marry, two-thirds divorce within five years.* It seems the money problems and dramatic life changes these young couples face are "bigger" than any love they once had.

That's not to say teenage parents can't work things out successfully. Just like older, better established parents, teens can and do experience the joy and satisfaction that comes with having a child. The difference is that teenage parents are generally undereducated, underemployed and underdeveloped—both emotionally and, in the case of teenage mothers, physically.


Chapter Action Tip: Use this
as a discussion starter to get
chapter members thinking of ways
they can address the problems of
teenage parenthood. Then, check out
"Building 'Healthy Families'" (pp.
10–11) for news of other FHA/HERO
members involved in the Families &
Futures Peer Education Project.
"Families & Futures" is co-
sored by Future Homemakers of
America and the March of Dimes Birth
Defects Foundation. It's purpose is to
get teens talking to teens about indi-
vidual and family health and well-
being.

In other words, teenage parents face obstacles that any parent, at any age, would find defeating.

More than a million American teenage girls get pregnant each year. Of the 600,000 who give birth, over 90 percent keep their babies. Most are trapped by a tragically limited future, but there are ways these teens can beat the odds.

First, teenage parents can avoid a life of poverty. But, they must stick it out in school or get into a special jobs training program. That means making good child care arrangements and, in many cases, getting financial assistance. So, teenage parents who get—or allow—their families' help tend to do better.

Second, the best bet for teenage mothers-to-be is to get prenatal care, eat well-balanced meals and refuse drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. Taking these precautions helps reduce the medical risks for both young mothers and their unborn children.

Finally, for teenage parents who need special counseling, there are a number of social services and trained individuals who can help them cope. For example, Jennifer and Thomasine wisely sought counseling when they could no longer handle their angers, fears and frustrations by themselves. Today, they are both moving successfully toward becoming good parents. ■

***"Marty Beyer"** has a doctorate degree in clinical/community psychology. She works in Washington, D.C. with young people in the juvenile justice system, teenage parents and adult women.*

TEENAGE

What's It Really Like To Be Teenage Parents?

HELP WANTED—FULL-TIME JOB

Hours: Around the clock; no weekends or holidays off. **Job duties:** Take complete responsibility, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially for another human being. **Qualifications:** Patience, flexibility, good judgment, organizational talents, and many many more. **Salary:** None: you pay for the privilege. Count on spending $2,000 just for getting the job, and about $2,800 for the first year of work. **Job duration:** A lifetime. You can't quit.

If you saw a job like this listed in the want ads, you'd probably laugh. "No one," you'd think, "would ever sign up for a job like this. Right?" Wrong! The job is called parenthood, and, according to a study done in 1974, about 1 million teenagers just like you sign up each year. The sad part is that at least two-thirds of them didn't intend to and don't want to become parents! And they unknowingly assume a lifetime job with little idea of what it involves.

Last month, CO-ED published an article called "Teenage Pregnancy." We talked with teenagers from all over the country—teenage girls who were or had been pregnant, teenage guys who had been responsible for a pregnancy. Some chose to keep their babies; others chose differently. For this month's feature, CO-ED talked with those teenagers who chose the route of parenthood. Read about their experiences, check out the facts, then ask yourself this question. Do I *really* want to be a teenage parent?

Mary: "I never guessed what a struggle it would be."

Mary, 17, a high school dropout and mother from Michigan, admits, "I honestly thought that getting pregnant, keeping the baby, and becoming a full-time mother would change my life for the better. I thought, What can I lose? I don't have much going for me now anyway. And at least with a baby, I'll feel needed. But I never guessed what a struggle it would be. It's lonely. Very lonely. The father took off the moment I told him I was pregnant. My parents barely speak to me, they're so ashamed. Friends? I don't have any anymore. I even felt shut out at the childbirth and prenatal care classes. The instructor and the other mothers just overlooked me—as if they wished I weren't there. Then, once you become a mother, somehow there's a label that comes with it. It reads, 'I am a mother. I am expected to act differently than I did before. I am no longer my own person, and whatever I want to be or become is no longer first on my list of priorities.' This might sound awful, but I really resent this little person having to depend on me for *everything*. And there's no way out. Not now.

"During the birth I had a feeling that something was wrong. By the time the nurse put the baby in my arms, I was shaking all over. They told me she was born with crooked legs. Casts might help, they said. I cried so hard and kept telling the baby over and over how sorry I was. I wanted so much to be a good mother, you know, to make things work, to show everyone how strong and capable I was, and already I had messed things up.

"My parents let me live with them, but we were all so tense and unhappy. We fought all the time. Money was really tight. And the only emotion I felt after a while was guilt. They said they'd take care of the baby if I found a job, but they couldn't afford to pay for the special casts she needed. I started looking for a job. But it was always the same thing. I'd walk in, fill out an application, and take it to the person in charge. One look at the application

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PARENTHOOD

GLEE LOWCAZO

and, 'Sorry, we can't use you.' Who'd hire a teenager full-time without a diploma? Finally I found a job capping bottles in a cosmetics factory. Long hours, low pay, and boredom—but I really needed the money.

"After I'd paid off the medical bills, I decided to move out of my parents' house. The tension started to rub off on the baby. She became cranky. So now the two of us live in a one-room flat over a grocery store, and she's in a day-care center. I don't mean to sound like a complainer since I'm the one who got myself into this predicament, but it's rough. Life's not pleasant. It's like it's the end of my life; you know, there's nothing to look forward to because nothing's ever going to change.

"Funny, this girl I met at work asked me if she could fix me up with someone. But you know I don't trust people like I used to. Besides, what guy wants to go out with a girl who has a baby?"

Darrell: "Life just isn't as much fun as it used to be."

"If I could do it all over again, I sure would have thought about the consequences," says Darrell, a 19-year-old father from Pennsylvania. "Janie and I were going out for a while, we talked about getting married in the future, but I was 17 and she was 16 when she told me she was pregnant. I wanted to do the right thing. After all, I loved Janie then and I knew the pregnancy was as much my fault as hers.

"My parents never understood why I wanted to get married—neither did Janie's parents. Mine said, 'Forget her and think about your own future.' And Janie's parents panicked. They never thought I was good enough for her—and getting their 'little girl' pregnant just plotted it even more in their eyes.'

Darrell had finished only three years of high school. He took the high school equivalency test, but failed. Job hunting got that much tougher for him. And the baby was due very soon.

"It never really hit me until the baby was born. That's when I knew I was a *father*, that I had made a little human being. I couldn't help thinking maybe I wasn't as ready for this as I thought.

"One thing I learned about very quickly was prejudice. I didn't really know what it meant until I couldn't rent an apartment, until nobody would hire me, until I couldn't get any credit, until banks didn't want to see me. Buy stuff for the baby? You've got to be kidding! We were lucky to buy food.

"I guess I always thought a kid would be kind of fun. Cute and lovable, and all it did was sleep and eat anyway. Not so. The baby usually spent the night screaming his head off. I was lucky to get a good night's sleep. He was sick a lot too. He seemed as unhappy as we were."

Darrell finally found a job at a garage, but it wasn't enough to pay all the bills—hospital bills, the rent, food money, and clothes for the baby who seemed to grow into a new size every week. So Darrell started working nights at the dairy.

The routine was exhausting, and eventually took its toll on their relationship. "One of the reasons I dated Janie was that we had so much fun. Now she's tired and blue all the time. She's not the girl I knew. But I guess I'm no prize either. How could I be? The place is always such a mess. It's hardly big enough for two, let alone for three. We have nothing, not even each other anymore. I wouldn't tell Janie this, but I dread going home. Running away is always on my mind, but I'm scared they'll lock me up for doing that. So sometimes I stop in one of the neighborhood bars to have a beer. Just to get away, to be alone.

"Back in high school I had been pretty good in math. One of my teachers told me I should think about going to computer school. That's where the money is, he said. There's no use in thinking about it now... I guess. Who'd pay the bills if I went to school? That's the kind of stuff I never thought about before."

In different ways, Mary, Darrell, and Janie faced problems almost universal among teenage parents—having a baby made it just about impossible to get ahead in the world and make something of their lives. Having a baby was often the beginning of the end of many relationships, including their own. Having a baby far from solved their problems; it only changed those problems and made life more difficult. Having a baby was such a drain financially, physically, and

(continued on page 73)

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TEENAGE PARENTS

(*continued from page 69*)

emotionally that it proved to be, at the very least, a monumental mistake. Impressed by facts? Here are some, based on studies made by Planned Parenthood:

- Twice as many teenagers who are mothers drop out of school and therefore lack key skills necessary for making a living.
- Teen mothers face greater risk of unemployment and welfare dependency.
- Three in five pregnant teenage brides will be divorced in six years.

Donna, 26, from Wyoming: "I had my first baby and dropped out of school when I was 17. Now I have three children. My husband really treats me bad. He shouts at me and the kids, and I know one night he's going to haul off and hit me. But I can't leave. What could I do? I don't even have secretarial skills. And you can't support three kids as a supermarket checkout girl. I'd give anything if I could go back and finish school. But I feel like it's too late now."

Phil, 20, from Kentucky, abandoned his 17-year-old wife and baby two years ago. "It's strange. I thought I was such a hotshot. No matter what anyone said, I thought that I would make it and do okay. I heard all the horror stories about having kids when you're so young and tying yourself down, but my parents had money, so I had money, so I had no problems, I thought. I didn't want to waste time. I wanted to marry this girl I made pregnant, be a husband a father, a big deal at an early age. I found out soon enough that money was only one problem. I never really understood what it was to be married and have a child. I thought it was going to be fun. You know, independence, freedom and all that. I was really stupid. There are a lot of heavy responsibilities involved that I just couldn't handle. I had to get out, get away. I messed up a lot of lives because I just didn't think."

So ... what do you think? The stories you have just read are true. How do you feel about them? What do you think about the people involved? Do you identify personally because you or a relative or a friend are in a similar situation? Or do you identify because you're a teenager and you know the problems involved? Ellen Peck ... [illegible] have written a new book called *The Parent Test* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, $8.95) ... gives a series of facts and questions by which you can test your aptitude for parenthood. And it answers some important questions, too. The authors listed four essentials—the bare minimum—that couples should have in order to be successful parents. Here they are.

HEALTH

Unfair as it may seem, teenage girls are able to have babies, but their bodies aren't quite ready to give a growing fetus all the nourishment it needs. This is because many girls, especially those under the age of 16, are still growing themselves. Unfortunately, this means that Mary's problem of having a baby with birth defects is not uncommon. Here are the statistics.

- Babies of young teens are two to three times more likely to die in the first year.
- Low birth weight and prematurity is twice as high among teenagers.
- Maternal death risk is 60 percent higher for young teenagers. Adolescent mothers are more likely to suffer from toxemia, a dangerous disease associated with pregnancy.

All this adds up to one important fact: *teenage mothers-to-be, more than any others, need good prenatal care, including regular checkups and nutritional guidance.* Unfortunately, because of money problems or embarrassment about the pregnancy, teenage girls are least likely to get the care they need.

HOME

Babies can be adorable, lively, and fun—sometimes. They are also messy. They need all sorts of extra equipment. They throw food and toys. They mess up their clothes. And they get sick. If you were to have a baby, would you and your husband/family be able to provide it with enough space to grow in, to explore? Would there be space enough to give other family members privacy as well? Most teenage parents live with their spouses in tiny apartments or they bring their babies to an already established (and maybe overcrowded) home. The result: confusion, mess, noise—and tension. As Darrell discovered, unless you have space for a baby, home is no longer a retreat in which to relax. It becomes a place to stay away from.

MONEY

Do you have $2,000 in a savings bank? If you do, great. It should be enough to pay for your baby's first *week* of life—providing that there are no health problems or surgery required in the delivery.

Here are some other figures that you'll want to know in estimating the cost of having a baby.

- Maternity wardrobe: $200
- Delivery and hospital costs: $2,000
- Layette, and first clothes, furniture, etc....approx. $800

Estimate for raising one child in a middle-income family through one year of college: **$100,000!**

Before taking the responsibility for a new life, think about your resources. How much money do you have saved? What about your job? Is it well-paying? Secure? Are there chances for promotion, further training? Does your community have adequate day care? Money isn't everything—unless you don't have it!

MATURITY

Maturity's a hard thing to judge, and it often has little to do with age. Still, to be a successful parent, you should have achieved certain goals in your own growing up. *The Parent Test* offers a checklist by which you can gauge your own readiness to be a parent. How many of the questions below can you answer "yes" to?

Have you achieved independence from your family financially? Or are your parents always buying you little extras here and there, floating you loans?

Have you achieved independence from your family emotionally? Or do your parents still advise you on everything you do?

Have you struggled with a major endeavor—job, school, developing a talent, travel—since you've been on your own? Do you know what it's like to succeed and/or fail in this endeavor?

Have you learned how to live intimately with another person? Learning how to be flexible, tolerant, how to put up with people's habits and

(*continued on page 82*)

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CONFLICTS

[illegible] to

[illegible] himself [illegible]

smiled. I finally understood.

You know what, Jeanne? Marjorie's pregnant." He brushed a hand across his cheek, then smiled. "And I'm very glad." Really, he had caught me by surprise. Another child? When there were [illegible] that whenever I was [illegible] and accept things, something new and unexpected came along?

On my brother Peter's eleventh birthday, June fourth, little Kenneth was born. He is nine months old now, and I love him. I really think he is responsible for bringing our family together. I know that I'm closer to Marjorie now than I've ever been. Maybe I'll never be able to talk to her the way I talked to Mom, but she's not a stranger anymore. She exists.

Recently I found these letters hidden in my drawer from a long time ago. This one was written to myself:

Jan. 24, 1976

"Dad told us to fix and clean the house. For some reason we have all been fighting, and he has been getting mad also. I don't think he can really blame us, though. He's hardly ever at home anymore, when we are. He's either working or visiting Marjorie. And when he is home, well, chances are Marjorie is there too. I can't talk to Dad when he's with her. Always laughing and making jokes. Maybe that's what it's like to be in love. I wonder.

"I worry about Mike a lot. He hasn't a mother, and only half a father. I don't mean that Dad isn't a very good father; it's the exact opposite, in fact! It's just that he's hardly ever home anymore. We haven't done anything as a family for ever so long. Sure, we did go somewhere for Christmas, but Marjorie came with us. Dad thinks it's the same, but it just isn't! Maybe I do live in the past too much, maybe I'm making myself refuse to love Marjorie. And maybe I'm not supposed to love Dad as much as I do. It just ends in hurt."

This one was written to Dad, only I never gave it to him.

July 1, 1976

"Dad,

We need a little of your help, please. You don't know your children, and we don't know you. I know you, and I love you. But I, along with everyone else, need more of you. I know this is a lot to ask. You're very busy with teaching and everything, but I think it's vital that you spend more time with us. The little fights—the ones that arise by the punch-up and end frantically, with half of us going to bed crying—need to be stopped.

I'm all mixed up. I hurt Mom once because I was being selfish, and after that I waited for an hour, just thinking. I love and [illegible] Mike one minute and [illegible] the next. I get so mad that I curse them a [illegible] the female inside. I guess this is [illegible] and I hope you'll forgive me. [illegible] your children. We're just not the [illegible] family we used to be.

That's why we need you. I [illegible] Mom than before. You're [illegible] father. I know it's probably hard for you to stay home with us. Like the minister said every time you [illegible] you remember Mom [illegible] seems [illegible] Dad. We [illegible] Mom [illegible] Mom [illegible] Mom

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Dimensions by the Southern Association on Children Under Six, (Membership and journal)
SAUS
Box 5403
Brody Station
Little Rock, AR 72215

Education for Parenthood, by Educational Development (Newsletter twice a year)
EDC Field Services
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02160

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Florida Alliance for Responsible Adolescent Parenting, Inc.
(Organization)

Growing Child, Growing Parent and Growing Child Store, by Growing Child (Trio of monthly newletters)
Growing Child
22 North Second Street
P.O. Box 620
Lafayette, IN 47902

Young Children, by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bimonthly journal)
NAEYC
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
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